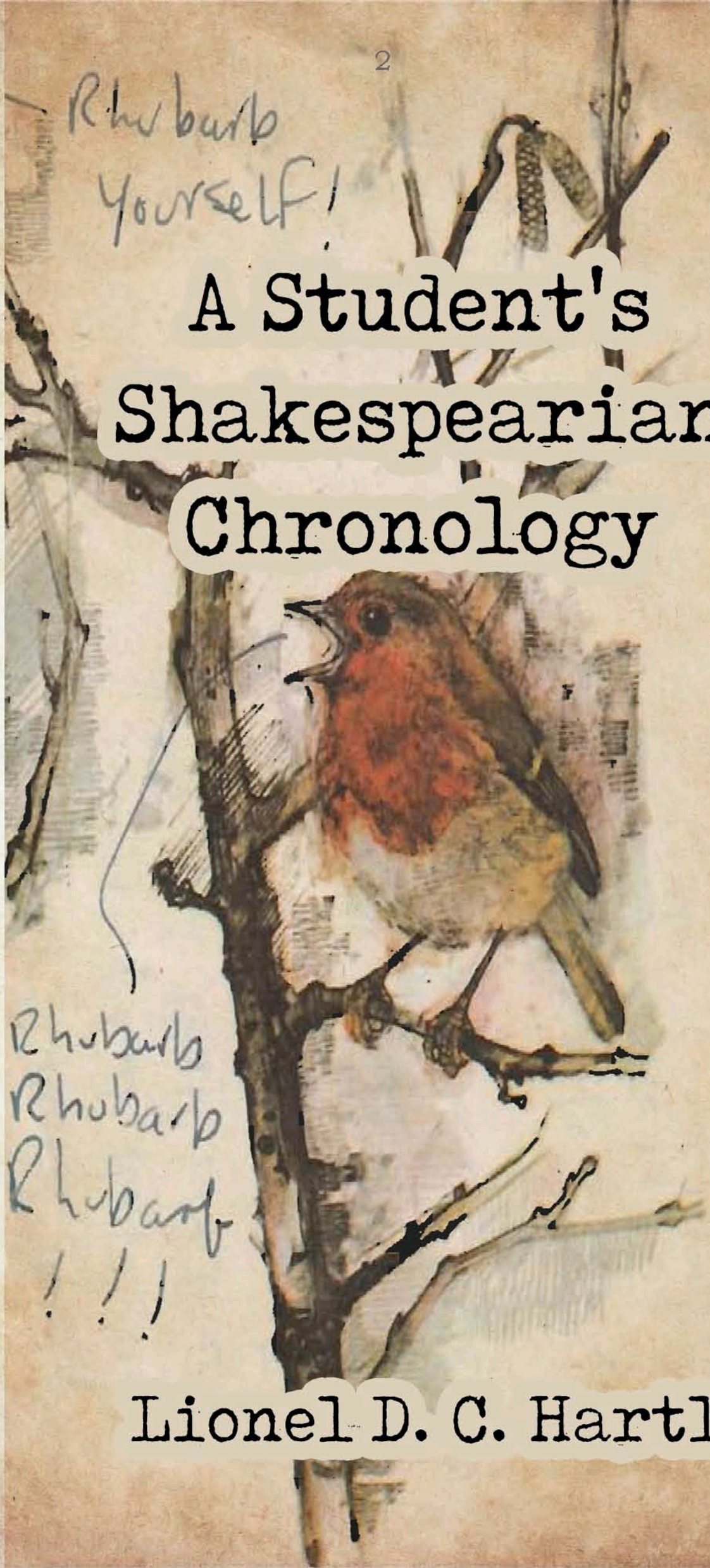

A Student's Shakespearian Chronology

Lionel D. C. Hartley

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Foreword

Scene: Aladdin's Cave 1971

Principal Boy (Who is really the Principal Girl) ... — What a funny old lamp, it must have come from the mission. Needs a good clean. (Rubs it vigorously)

FLASHES, THUNDER CLAPS, ETCETERA, ETCETERA

The Genie of the Lamp (Appearing O.P. wearing black, of course) — What is your will, O Principal Boy (or Principal Girl)?

Principal Boy (also in black) ... — My will? Just fix the lights, set the stage, arrange the props, do the sound effects, make this, mend that! Work the tape recorder, paint that chair pink and that box black. The do some acting too!

Genie — Certainly, Principal Boy. Anything you ask – it shall be done. (Aside) Little does she know my name is Lionel!

Disappears in a cloud of crêpe hair.

CURTAIN

Long may this little one-act-play be repeated

— Wendy de la Bere, 1970

Introduction

In my research, I found that there is no completely certain chronological order for Shakespeare's writings. Few manuscripts survive, and many plays were printed years after they were written. The dates in this booklet are therefore approximate composition dates, based on scholarly consensus and evidence such as performances, publication records, references in other works, and stylistic analysis.

I've included the plays, major poems, the Sonnets, and the principal collaborative/attributed works, rather than treating every later edition or adaptation as a separate "writing." Shakespeare wrote at least 38 plays, while the exact number varies depending on how collaborations and disputed works are counted.

Disclaimer:

The designations Comedy or Tragedy in this booklet are subjective, because it is based on my own reading, interpretation and understanding of the text. This is a student resource, by a student for students; it is not a definitive scholarly work.

— Lionel D C Hartley, 1970

The Chronology

c1589-1592 - The Taming of the Shrew
Comedy - A boisterous comedy about Petruchio's attempt to "tame" the strong-willed Katherina and their unconventional courtship.

c1590-1591 - Henry VI, Part 2
History - Political rivalries, rebellion, and civil unrest destabilize England during Henry VI's weak reign.

c1590-1591 - Henry VI, Part 3
History - The Wars of the Roses intensify as York and Lancaster fight for control of the English crown.

c1591-1592 - Henry VI, Part 1
History - England struggles with France and internal factionalism during the early reign of Henry VI.

c1591-1592 - Titus Andronicus
Tragedy - A Roman general becomes trapped in an escalating cycle of revenge, mutilation, violence, and political destruction.

c1592 - Richard III
History/Tragedy - Richard ruthlessly manipulates and murders his way toward the English throne before finally facing defeat.

c1592-1593 - Venus and Adonis
Narrative poem - Venus passionately pursues the beautiful Adonis, who rejects her and ultimately dies while hunting.

c1593-1594 - The Comedy of Errors
Comedy - Two pairs of identical twins create an increasingly chaotic series of mistaken identities in the city of Ephesus.

c1593-1594 - The Two Gentlemen of Verona
Comedy - Friendship and love are tested when two young men fall for the same woman and one betrays the other.

c1593-1594 - Lucrece (The Rape of Lucrece)
Narrative poem - The rape of the virtuous Lucrece by Tarquin becomes a meditation on sexual violence, honour, guilt, and political revolution.

c1594-1595 - Love's Labour's Lost
Comedy - Four young men swear to avoid women and worldly pleasures, only to have their vows undone by love.

c1594-1596 - Romeo and Juliet
Tragedy - Two young lovers from feuding families fall in love, with their secret relationship ending in catastrophic tragedy.

c1595-1596 - Richard II
History - The deposition of Richard II explores kingship, legitimacy, political power, and the consequences of misrule.

c1595-1596 - A Midsummer Night's Dream
Comedy - Lovers, fairies, and amateur actors become

entangled in a magical forest where love and identity constantly shift.

c1596-1597 - King John
England's King John struggles against France, political rivals, and questions surrounding legitimate kingship.

c1596-1597 - The Merchant of Venice
Comedy/Complexity play - Contracts, prejudice, mercy, friendship, and love collide when the merchant Antonio becomes indebted to Shylock.

c1596-1597 - Henry IV, Part 1
History - Prince Hal's transformation from irresponsible youth to future king unfolds amid rebellion and his relationship with Falstaff.

c1597-1598 - Henry IV, Part 2
History - As Henry IV's health fails, Prince Hal prepares to become Henry V and leaves his former companions behind.

c1597-1601 - The Merry Wives of Windsor
Comedy - Falstaff attempts to seduce two married women, who instead conspire to humiliate him.

c1598 - Much Ado About Nothing
Comedy - Sharp-witted Beatrice and Benedick resist love while a darker plot threatens the happiness of Claudio and Hero.

c1599 - Henry V
History - Henry V invades France and achieves a celebrated victory at Agincourt while Shakespeare examines the costs and psychology of war.

c1599 - As You Like It - Comedy - Exile in the Forest of Arden allows Rosalind, disguised as a man, to explore love, identity, and human nature.

c1599 - Julius Caesar
Tragedy - Roman conspirators assassinate Caesar, but their attempt to save the Republic instead produces political chaos and civil war.

c1600-1601 - Hamlet
Tragedy - Prince Hamlet investigates his father's murder and becomes consumed by revenge, uncertainty, mortality, and political corruption.

c1600-1601 - The Merry Wives of Windsor (revision/ expansion)
Comedy - Shakespeare's Falstaff comedy appears to have undergone revision; its precise composition history remains uncertain.

c1601 - The Phoenix and Turtle
Poem - An enigmatic allegorical poem mourning the death of two mythical birds and contemplating ideal, transcendent love.

c1601 - Twelfth Night
Comedy - Viola disguises herself as a man after a shipwreck, creating a complicated triangle of

mistaken identity and unrequited love.

c1601-1602 - Troilus and Cressida
Tragedy/Complexity play - Set during the Trojan War, the play presents love, honor, heroism, and war through a deeply cynical lens.

c1603-1606 - All's Well That Ends Well
Comedy/Complexity play - Helena pursues Bertram through an unusual marriage bargain, raising uncomfortable questions about love, status, and desire.

c1604 - Othello
Tragedy - Iago manipulates the noble Othello into believing that his wife Desdemona has betrayed him, producing jealousy and murder.

c1604 - Measure for Measure
Comedy/Complexity play - A ruler secretly observes his city while Angelo enforces harsh laws, exposing conflicts between justice, sexuality, morality, and mercy.

c1604-1606 - Timon of Athens
Tragedy - A wealthy Athenian discovers the selfishness of his supposed friends after his generosity leaves him impoverished.

c1605-1606 - King Lear
Tragedy - An aging king divides his kingdom according to his daughters' professions of love and

discovers the terrible consequences of his judgment.

c1606 - Macbeth
Tragedy - Prophecies of kingship drive Macbeth and Lady Macbeth toward murder, tyranny, guilt, and ultimately destruction.

c1606-1607 - Antony and Cleopatra
Tragedy - The passionate relationship between Antony and Cleopatra collides with Roman politics, military ambition, and the rise of Octavius Caesar.

c1608 - Coriolanus
Tragedy - A proud Roman warrior becomes a political leader but his contempt for ordinary citizens ultimately brings about his downfall.

c1608 - Pericles, Prince of Tyre
Romance - Pericles survives shipwrecks, loss, separation, and political danger before being reunited with his wife and daughter.

c1609-1610 - Cymbeline
Romance/Tragicomedy - A princess faces deception and exile in a complicated story involving jealousy, war, mistaken identity, and reconciliation.

c1610-1611 - The Winter's Tale
Romance/Reconciliation - A king's irrational jealousy destroys his family, but years later loss gives way to one of Shakespeare's most remarkable scenes of reconciliation.

c1610-1611 - The Tempest
Romance/Forgiveness - The exiled Prospero uses magic to bring his enemies to an island, where revenge gradually gives way to forgiveness and freedom.

c1612-1613 - Cardenio
Lost play, collaboration - A collaboration with John Fletcher based partly on Don Quixote; the original play is lost and survives only indirectly.

c1613 - Henry VIII (All Is True)
History - The reign of Henry VIII is dramatized through political upheaval, royal marriages, and the rise and fall of powerful figures.

c1613-1614 - The Two Noble Kinsmen
Romance/Tragicomedy - Two imprisoned friends fall in love with the same woman, turning friendship into rivalry; it was written collaboratively with John Fletcher.

The Sonnets

The 154 Sonnets deserve separate treatment because their dates cannot be established individually with confidence. They were first published together in 1609, but many were probably composed considerably earlier, perhaps during the 1590s and early 1600s.

c1592-1604 - Sonnets 1-154
A sequence exploring love, beauty, time, mortality, jealousy, sexual desire, betrayal, poetry, and the attempt to defeat death through verse.

1609 - First publication of the Sonnets - Thomas Thorpe published the 154-sonnet collection in quarto; this is the basis for virtually all modern editions.

Two sonnets-138 and 144-had actually appeared earlier, in The Passionate Pilgrim (1599), a miscellany containing poems by Shakespeare and other writers.

Other poems and disputed works

The Passionate Pilgrim (1599)
A miscellany of poems attributed to Shakespeare, although several are by other poets; only some of the contents are genuinely Shakespeare's.

"A Lover and His Lass" (c1599-1600)
A song appearing in As You Like It, celebrating spring, love, and youthful pleasure.

"It Was a Lover and His Lass" / songs from the plays
Shakespeare wrote numerous songs and lyrics embedded within his dramas; these are generally counted as parts of the plays rather than separate works.

The Phoenix and Turtle (1601)
Shakespeare's major standalone occasional poem, printed in Robert Chester's Love's Martyr.

A Yorkshire Tragedy (1608)
Once attributed to Shakespeare, but modern scholarship generally regards it as primarily by Thomas Middleton.

Sir Thomas More (c1590s-1600s)
A collaborative manuscript play containing a passage traditionally attributed to Shakespeare; the attribution is plausible but not absolutely certain.

Arden of Faversham (c1590-1592)
A play sometimes proposed as containing Shakespeare's contribution, but the attribution remains disputed.

The History of Cardenio (c1612-1613)
A lost collaboration with John Fletcher, apparently based on an episode from Cervantes's Don Quixote. A later play called Double Falsehood was published by Lewis Theobald in 1728 and claimed as an adaptation, but its relationship to Cardenio remains controversial.

The Two Noble Kinsmen (1613-1614)
Now widely accepted as a collaboration between Shakespeare and John Fletcher

Major standalone poetry in publication order

Disclaimer
These are listed here in publication date order, although composition chronology is much more useful than publication chronology. For example, Shakespeare's first printed play, Titus Andronicus, appeared in 1594, but it had almost certainly been written earlier; conversely, 18 of the plays were not printed until the First Folio of 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death.

1593 - Venus and Adonis
His first published poem, a sensual narrative based on Ovid's myth of Venus and Adonis.

1594 - Lucrece (The Rape of Lucrece)
A darker narrative poem about rape, honour, guilt, and political revolt.

1599 - The Passionate Pilgrim
A miscellany containing several Shakespeare poems alongside works by other authors.

1601 - The Phoenix and Turtle
An allegorical meditation on ideal love and death.

1609 - Shakespeare's Sonnets
The complete 154-sonnet collection, although the poems themselves were probably written over a much longer period.

Repertory Theatre Society
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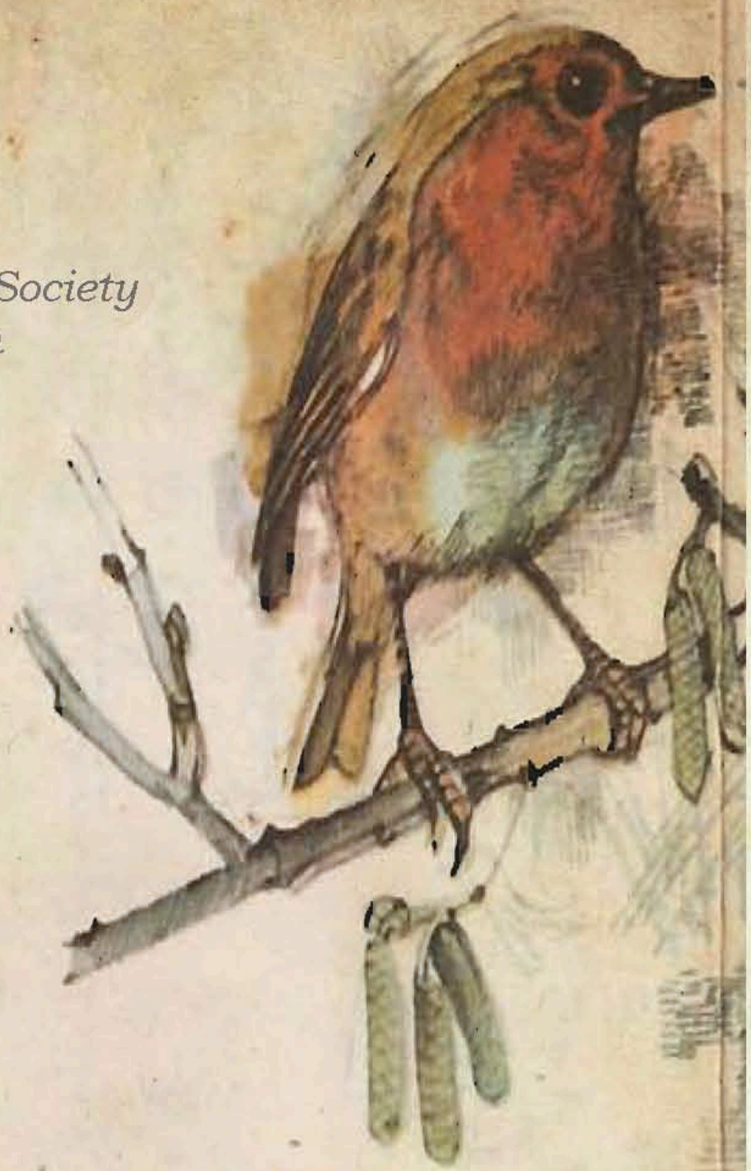

Long may this little one act play be repeated!

Wendy de la Bere

1970